



SMOKING — SIDE EFFECTS YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF

You've heard it a thousand times before: smoking can lead to lung cancer and cause heart disease. However, out of the 45 million smokers in the United States, many aren't aware of all the health risks.

According to the American Cancer Society, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States for both men and women. It's also the most preventable form of cancer death in our society. However, lung cancer isn't the only form of cancer linked to tobacco.

Many other potentially fatal forms of tobacco-related cancer include:

- Cancer of the mouth, lips, or tongue
- Cancer of the esophagus (throat)
- Cancer of the nose
- Cancer of the pancreas or urinary tract
- Cancer of the penis, cervix, or vulva
- Squamous cell carcinoma, a type of skin cancer

Non-cancerous health issues

Cancer isn't the only health concern associated with nicotine. Smoking has been linked to other illnesses and problems, such as Crohn's disease, lupus, chronic bronchitis, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, infertility, and diabetes. With many of these illnesses, continued smoking irritates and worsens the condition.

Smoking also increases the risk of developing osteoporosis and bone fractures. Tobacco use has been shown to lower bone density. Decreased bone density is a larger concern for women, since smoking is linked to early menopause, which can substantially decrease bone mass as well. Because of lower bone density, smokers are more likely to fracture or break their bones, especially as they get older. Plus, the breaks and fractures of smokers take much longer to heal than for non-smokers.

In addition to illnesses, smoking affects your physical appearance. Wrinkles in the skin occur much earlier in smokers, making smokers appear to be years older than their actual age. Fingernails and hair get discolored in smokers, and smelly clothes are a common side effect.

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Smoking and oral health

Smoking cigarettes, pipes, and cigars can lead to an increased risk of problems in your mouth, including:

- Bad breath and stained teeth
- Tooth loss, plaque, and tartar buildup
- Susceptibility to infections and gum disease
- Problems with salivary glands and jawbones
- Slower healing from dental procedures and surgery
- Increased risk of mouth, lip, tongue, and throat cancer

Smoking and vision

Smoking also increases the risk of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) — the leading cause of blindness for people older than age 65. Even passive smokers have increased risk of AMD.

Bottom line

Non-smokers' health risks are tiny compared to those of smokers. Quitting smoking, regardless of your age or how long you have smoked, helps you feel better — and look better.

Additional resources

Visit [MyHumana](#) on [Humana.com](#) and click on the "Health & Wellness" tab and "Condition Centers" to find the section on tobacco cessation in the pull-down tab.

Sources:

www.thescooponsmoking.org

www.cancer.org

www.lungusa.org